

Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service Employee Newsletter



New Faces, New Legislation: Colorado Embraces Change



655 Parfet Street, RM E200C

Lakewood, CO 80215-5505

720-544-2863-P

720-544-2965-F



Highlights

by

Allen Green

State Conservationist

The last few months have brought with them quite a few changes for NRCS in Colorado and the coming months will continue this pattern.

On a more positive note, we have had yet another Coloradoan selected as a State Conservationist (Jeff Burwell was selected as the State Conservationist for Idaho).

Frank Riggle has agreed to assume the position of Assistant State Conservationist for Technology, which will include most of his previous duties plus those of the State Resource Conservationist.

We also welcome a new addition to the Colorado Leadership Team with the selection of J.B. Martin as Deputy State Conservationist.

J.B. has served in numerous capacities within NRCS across the country and most recently prior to this selection was serving as the Assistance State Conservationist for Field Office Operations in Arizona. We greatly anticipate J.B. reporting for duty on August 31, 2008.

Another positive change you may recognize revolves around our continued and evidenced commitment to our conservation planning efforts.

We're not only in the process of developing outreach materials and tools for field offices to use to help communicate the importance of conservation planning, but we have also worked within our

programs to take the conservation planning process into greater consideration.

This is and will continue to be the case as we begin to roll out and implement the newly passed 2008 Farm Bill.

This new legislation provides a wealth of opportunity for NRCS to continue and enhance our efforts to help people help the land by supporting the implementation of conservation practices onto their land.

The new Bill also opens numerous new doors for collaborative initiatives and activities with traditional and non-traditional natural resource partners and customers.

As we approach the end of another fiscal year, I grow increasingly enthusiastic and excited about the up and coming months and years.

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One Step At A Time...



The Office of Public Affairs is just weeks away from distributing the newly developed Conservation Planning...Our Purpose, Our Passion Communications Kit.

The document was developed to assist Colorado field offices share information about the importance of conservation planning and its benefits.

There are numerous tools in the kit designed to reach the savviest or the beginning farmer and rancher in our quest to instill an understanding and generate increased interest in developing a conservation plan.

There are also some fun conservation education tools designed to spark an interest in the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

The conservation planning kit includes the following:

- ▶ Q&As on conservation planning (for internal and external audiences)
- ▶ Brochure
- ▶ Fact Sheet
- ▶ Feature Article
- ▶ Fill-in-the-blank News Releases
- ▶ PowerPoint Presentation
- ▶ Radio Public Service Announcements
- ▶ Posters
- ▶ Post Cards
- ▶ Letter
- ▶ Word Find
- ▶ Crossword Puzzle
- ▶ Conservation Maze
- ▶ Word Jumble
- ▶ NRCS Natural Resource Concerns Survey
- ▶ Sample Conservation Plan
- ▶ Conservation Planning Self-Assessment

Stay Tuned....

San Isabel Land Trust Honored for 10,000 Acres of Working Land

by Katherine Burse-Johnson
Public Affairs Specialist

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment Mark Rey honored the San Isabel Land Protection Trust for achieving 10,000 acres of working agricultural land under conservation easements in Wet Mountain Valley at a celebration held in Westcliffe, Colorado, on May 23, 2008.

A branding and barbecue event was held to mark the seven years of work it took to preserve those acres.

Around the table were local ranchers and officials from the San Isabel Land Protection Trust, Great Outdoors Colorado, other land trust partners, and the USDA.

"I would like to acknowledge Great Outdoors Colorado, all the local individuals, land trust partners, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service for the contributions they have made to the Wet Mountain Valley Project," Rey said.

"What we're doing is celebrating."

The celebration was held on the Rusk Ranch, owned by Randy Rusk, in honor of the Rusk family being the first to step forward to protect their land through the use of a conservation easement, a legal tool that acquires development rights while allowing landowners to retain ownership.

After the Rusks placed the easement on their property, at least five other ranches decided to join them to keep their ranches and the Wet Mountain Valley in continued productive agriculture.

Funding for the conservation easements came from a combination of local landowner financial and in-kind contributions, land trust organization funds, Great Outdoors Colorado, and the USDA-NRCS Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.

Approximately 75 local ranchers, land trust individuals, and government agency representatives attended the celebration.



From left to right: Randy Rusk; USDA Deputy Under Secretary Mark Rey; Jim Sperry, Natural Resources Conservation Service; and Jeff Othier, U.S. Forest Service.

Meet Jennifer M. Griffin: Franktown's Summer SCEP Student



The Franktown Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field office in Colorado would like to welcome Jennifer Griffin to their staff as their new Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) student for this summer.

Jennifer M. Griffin comes to us from the Natural State, Arkansas, and was born and raised in the town of Crossett, Arkansas.

Jennifer is a senior at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff where she is aspiring to obtain a degree in Agricultural Business with a minor in Agronomy.

Jennifer is a 4-H leader in Ashley and Jefferson County in Arkansas, Vice President for Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), Assistant Secretary for the Agriculture Club, and Senator for her senior class.

She is also Navigator for the School of Agriculture Human Sciences and Fisheries and Coordinator for the Arkansas F.A.R.M.Y (Future Agricultural Resources for Minority Youth) group.

Her hobbies include reading, shopping, going to church, spending time with her family, working in her community and school, and spending time with her dog, Jasley.

After graduating, Jennifer plans to make Colorado her home by becoming a Soil Conservationist for the NRCS.



Meet Wayne Jipsen Area One's New Area Conservationist

Wayne was raised on a 160-acre farm in southwest Iowa. He grew up working with dairy cows, a cow-calf herd, sheep, swine, chickens, and horses.

Wayne enjoyed eight years in 4-H, showing cattle and hogs and giving farm-related presentations.

Wayne received a bachelors of science degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University. During his college summers, Wayne worked for the Iowa Conservation Commission.

He spent two summers working in fisheries management and one working in wildlife management.

Upon graduation, Wayne worked as a construction foreman, laying concrete foundations and building steel grain bins and grain handling systems.

Later, Wayne returned to the family farm for six years, but it was no longer classified as a small farm. It had grown to include 1,000 rented corn and soybean acres, a farrow to finish hog operation with 40 sows, a 100-head cow-calf stock herd, and the annual purchase of another 100 calves to finish.

In 1986, Wayne worked for three and one-half years as a Park Ranger, working in recreation and natural resource management at a variety of federal areas in Oklahoma, Texas, New York City

(Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island), Seattle, and Lake Okeechobee, Florida.

It was in Florida where Wayne first became involved with the management of invasive species.

As a Park Ranger, he oversaw an invasive program that included chemical, biological, mechanical, and physical control methods on over 200 public waterbodies.

Over the course of his career, he worked with USDA researchers to develop new biological controls, worked with the Environmental Protection Agency and herbicide manufacturers to test new herbicide formulations and develop labeling guidelines, and worked with various universities to conduct invasive weed management research activities.

In 1997, through various partnership activities, Wayne was tasked to manage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners for Fish and Wildlife" and "Private Lands" programs in Florida.

As the statewide coordinator, Wayne implemented the program in one-third of the state and supervised the activities of two other biologists working in the rest of the state.

In addition, he represented the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the Natural Resources Conservation Service's State

Technical Committee; worked with NRCS employees to establish EQIP and WHIP priorities; and, served on several ranking committees.

In 2007, Wayne accepted the position of Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Coordinator for the newly authorized Historic Trails RC&D Area in south-central Wyoming.

In three years, he assisted the council with numerous community development, economic development, and recreation projects.

Wayne jumped at the chance when the opportunity arose to come to Colorado and work as coordinator of the Colorado Big Country RC&D.

During his three and one-half years there, Wayne assisted the council on a wide variety of invasive species educational projects, community development projects, and natural resource conservation projects.

In his new role as Area Conservationist, Wayne is looking forward to working with the dedicated Area One staff and partners to deliver NRCS's programs to the people of northwest Colorado.

Wayne is married to Susan McKeon. They enjoy many outdoor activities including camping, hiking, biking, cross country and downhill skiing, snowshoeing, and scenic drives.

Second Annual Backyard Conservation Camp Held

by Joe Crowder, Soil Conservationist
Holyoke Field Office

The Haxtun and Sedgwick County Conservation Districts (CD) hosted two Backyard Conservation Camps in Julesburg near DePoorter Lake and in Haxtun along Frenchman Creek.

"Aquatics" was this year's theme, according to Denise Swanson, District Manager, Haxtun CD.

The two-day camps allowed youngsters from 4th through 8th grades to get wet, capture water creatures, handle a snake, and learn about conservation.

Jerry Miller, District Conservation Technician for the two districts, led the daily events based upon the Aldo Leopold Educational principle of striving for a land ethic to instill a love, a respect, and an admiration for the land.

Students were encouraged to observe, interpret nature, and journal their thoughts reflecting how all things in nature are interconnected and what effects personal actions may have on natural systems.

The young conservationists enjoyed nature walks, discovered the varied wildlife and plants living and growing in our riparian zones, and considered various animal and plant relationships.

Activities included studying the food web, building water scopes to see beneath the water's surface, learning the influences of water quality, discovering the affects of erosion created by water, and examining river health.

The students erected a wood duck nesting box with the assistance of Matt Filsinger, biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The highlight of each camp was the "RSI" – Riparian Scene Investigation.

A scenario was laid out on a large sheet giving clues of animals and tracks, water situations, and environmental concerns.

The students had to decipher the situation and record their observations and conclusions.

The districts were assisted by personnel from the Colorado Division of Wildlife and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Contributions were also provided from Randy and Renee Weis, Darlene Weis, Phillips County Pheasants Forever, Haxtun Super, and the Julesburg Family Market.



At the conservation camps, each student was able to look through the transit and note the rod reading.

See photos from the conservation camps on page 6.

EWP and EQIP to Help in Crowley County After Wildfire

by Mary Miller,
Area Public Affairs Specialist

In mid-April, a wildfire burned the ground cover off 9,000 acres of land in Crowley County.

Two firefighters lost their lives and several families lost their homes as the entire town of Ordway was evacuated.

The Colorado USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), seeing the effects of the fire on the natural resources in the county, worked with the County Board of Commissioners to apply for NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) funds to implement recovery measures to mitigate this natural resource disaster.

The county received almost \$184,000 in EWP funds to pay for deep chiseling and grass seeding in the burn area.

Because of the high visibility of the fire and the EWP work, many landowners who own ground that was not revegetated when water was sold off the land in the 1970s, went to NRCS and the county commissioners to ask what could be done so that such a disaster does not occur again.

NRCS now has in place a special initiative cost-share program to revegetate the abandoned irrigated land in Crowley County. Sign ups are currently being taken.

In addition, the County has monies for those who do not qualify for NRCS dollars. NRCS will take each parcel of land and decide on a site-specific method of treatment.

Sedgwick County and Haxtun Conservation District Conservation Camp

Right: The youngest student of the group tosses a net to capture zoo plankton for evaluation during the water health session.



Top: Each group erected an auto-graphed wood duck nesting box at the water's edge.

Left: Future technicians Jessica and Kaylee take turns with the level.



Top: District conservation technician, Jerry Miller, explains the Aldo Leopold philosophy of conservation to students.



Top: DOW conservation officer, Jack Wieland, shows off a bull snake that was swimming up stream just at the right time.



Top: Homemade water scopes bring underwater critters up close and personal.



Top: District conservation technician, Jerry Miller, discusses river health with a group of campers.



Top: The most difficult part of the class was teaching the snake the "come" command.



Top: Student Jessica saw a bug this big during the RSI – "Riparian Scene Investigation."

Colorado NRCS Approves Approximately \$540,000 in Conservation Innovation Grants

The Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has recently announced approximately \$540,000 in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) to fund 12 projects throughout the state to develop technologies that will help farmers conserve and sustain natural resources on their operations.

A short narrative on each approved project is as follows:

Biodiesel for the Local Farmer Pilot Project

Submitted by: Costilla County Economics Development Council, Inc.

The bio-fuels and the by-product of feed meal will be used by the producers to produce bio-fuels using three different oilseed crops in an underserved area where this is new to the area.

Reclaiming Formally Irrigated Sandhill Cropland

Submitted by: Yuma County Conservation District

The Yuma County Conservation District will be trying to reclaim formerly sandy irrigated cropland. The croplands had been in corn production but due to lack of irrigation water, the producers are trying to convert the lands back to native grasslands and are targeting forage species that will benefit the greater prairie chickens and other wildlife.

Grazing Land and Forest Health and Wildlife Habitat

Submitted by: Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory

This project's goal is to demonstrate using fire as a tool to manage grazing and forestlands. In accomplishing this, a local fire cooperative, which will consist of landowners, organizations, state, federal, and private partners, will be created.

No-Till Sunflowers for Oilseed Production

Submitted by: Dove Creek Conservation District

The Dove Creek Conservation District's goal is to transfer the "No-

Till Technology" into an area that has used moldboard since the 1940s and has not budged from this operation, even by increasing the Environmental Quality Incentives Program cost docket. Will provide a larger incentive to demonstrate the practice and promote the production of oilseed crops for biodiesel.

Seed Production of Native Plants Beneficial to Sage Grouse

Submitted by: Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center

This project will identify plants and collect seed for sage grouse habitat. Due to the decline of Greater Sage Grouse populations, it has been identified that the habitat must be improved and more available seed sources.

Stimulating Riparian Conservation through Demonstration and Assessment of Biological Tamarisk Control

Submitted by: Painted Sky RC&D

This project will set up four demonstration sites using biological control on tamarisk without mechanical control. The project will involve monitoring the progress of beetle and re-vegetation sites and will include training in data collection.

The Republican River Basin Pathway Project

Submitted by: Yuma Conservation District

This project will help disseminate the data information gathered in a previous CIG. Data was gathered in the economics in converting from high water usage crops to low water crops to be used for biodiesel and meal products.

Colorado Farm Energy Audit Data Collector Training Program

Submitted by: EnSave Inc.

This project plans to create an energy audit data collection training program. The goal is to establish a training and certification plan for data collectors who will perform and train producers in the data collection methodology. This will help analyze farm energy.

Online Irrigation Conservation Market and Farm Management Tool

Submitted by: Central Colorado Water Conservancy District

This project plans to create an online Irrigation Conservation Market to help producers plan their water needs and market their surplus water for other producers to be able to buy for their irrigation needs. It will also be able to control the irrigation wells using telemetry for better irrigation water management.

Farm-Scale Animal Feed and Biodiesel Demonstration Project

Submitted by: Southeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development

This project plans to establish a small-scale biodiesel and meal production facility in rural Eastern Colorado. Due to limited irrigation water, the area needs to find crops and opportunities to increase and maintain revenues.

Small-Scale Wind Opportunities Demonstration Project

Submitted by: Southeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development

This project will promote the use and viability of Small Wind Power Plants in the Northeast Prowers Conservation District. Although not a new technology, its status as an alternative power source is not widely accepted. Project will include workshops, micro-siting, and analysis of producer sites.

Conversion of Potato Waste to Value-Added Products and Energy in the San Luis Valley

Submitted by: San Luis Valley Resource Conservation and Development

The goal of this project is to improve water and energy conservation. It will convert 5.8 miles of lateral ditches to pipeline, and will control and monitor flows through the new pipeline exclusively with solar-powered equipment. It is the first in the Western Slope of Colorado.

For more information visit
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cig>.

on the pulse

State Office News

NRCS Welcomes. . .



Carol L. Tresco, Human Resources Assistant.

Carol started with NRCS in May 2008. She is the new Human Resources Assistant and her job responsibilities include personnel processing, benefits, and error resolution.

Prior to coming to our agency, Carol worked as a Human Resources Assistant with the U.S. Geological Survey in Lakewood where her duties included personnel processing, staffing/classification, error resolution, and payroll processing.

Carol and her husband, Vincent, have two dogs, a

miniature Schnauzer and Yorkshire mix. She also has two daughters and three grandchildren.

Outside of her 29 years of working in the federal government, Carol enjoys reading, swimming, hiking, and bike-riding.



J.B. Martin is the new **Deputy State Conservationist.**

Currently, J.B. Martin serves NRCS-Arizona as the Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations (area one) in Flagstaff.

He is in charge of the northern counties of Arizona and 13 NRCS-Arizona offices.

Martin started his NRCS career as a co-operative

education student in 1991, serving in Red Oak, Anamosa and Storm Lake, Iowa.

Martin worked as a District Conservationist in Madison, Wis., prior to his current position in Arizona, which he has held since 2004.

In Arizona, Martin actively mentors young people and coaches high school basketball, football and track.

Martin, his wife Teresa, and daughter, Jaria, live in Flagstaff and he will report to Colorado NRCS on August 31, 2008.



Above: A Cultural Resources Management (CRM) Workshop for NRCS employees was held in Trinidad, CO, from June 24 - 26, 2008.

State Office News

Administration Office - What Are They Up To?

Management Services



Ground Breaking Ceremony in Alamosa

Representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) field offices from Center, La Jara, and Alamosa as well as the NRCS Monte Vista Area Office were in attendance for the official ground breaking ceremony for the construction of the new Area Office.

The new building will serve as the new Area Four office and will be co-located with the Alamosa Field Office, Resource Conservation and Development Office, and the Major Land Resource Area Office, which are currently located in the USDA Service Center.

The new building is tentatively scheduled to open in November 2008.

The landowners, Rosalie and Leroy Martinez and State Office Contract Specialist, John Vallejos, presided over the ceremony.

Human Resources

The Colorado Natural Resources Conservation Service is committed to employee excellence and creating a productive work environment.

Our commitment to human resources includes initiatives to attract and retain top-quality personnel as well as develop employees and future managers.

The Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) offers the opportunity to blend academic studies and Federal work experience into a progressive educational program.

Colorado had 15 students in the SCEP in 2008. Four new students were added to the program and two returning students were converted to permanent career-conditional appointments.

Lana Armon was placed in Franktown and Stacey Brown was placed in Fort Morgan. A big thank you to Roy Hall for placing these students in Area 2!

The State Office hosted a one day orientation/training session for the SCEP supervisors and students.

The supervisors had a training session in the morning, while the students went off-site for a networking opportunity.

In the afternoon, both the supervisors and the students had additional training about the program and work expectations.

Eight students will be graduating in the spring of 2009 and will be eligible for placement into permanent positions.

Financial Management

Goodbye FedTraveler, Hello GovTrip!

On June 23, 2006, USDA awarded an eGovernment Travel Contract to Northrop Grumman Mission Systems.

The travel system is called GovTrip. GovTrip replaces the existing processes for making temporary duty travel reservations, preparing authorizations, and vouchering for reimbursement.

GovTrip provides self service online booking, electronic authorization and vouchering, automated routing for approvals, and split disbursements.

NRCS went live with the new travel system, GovTrip, on July 7, 2008. Travel regulations have not changed, just the method of making reservations and receiving reimbursement.

Area administrative coordinators and state office secretaries received training on GovTrip in June, 2008. These employees will be the first point of contact for GovTrip.

Lynn Hahn, Helen Abbey, and Jami Shepherd are the Federal Agency Travel Administrators (FATAs) for Colorado and will work closely with the area administrative coordinators and state office secretaries to make sure everyone's travel gets processed.

A few major changes went into effect under this new system, so be sure to contact your area administrative coordinator or state office secretary with any questions or problems you may have.

If they are unable to answer your questions, the FATAs will be contacted.

on the pulse

Area Office News

Area One

On April 18th the Shavano Conservation District in Montrose sponsored an Earth Day Bioengineering Workshop.

Private landowners and five different agencies participated in the streambank restoration project. **Steve Woodis, Wildlife Biologist**, Montrose, and **Lars Santana, Rangeland Management Specialist**, Montrose, were instructors for the 25 participants and demonstrated several bio-engineering practices during the 'hands on' workshop.

Pictured below are attendees getting ready to install a willow fascine.



The Shavano

Conservation District sponsored an Arbor Day workshop on April 25th. A group of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders from Delta learned about stream dynamics and restoration.

The students learned how to plant and protect trees.

Pictured below are some of the students around a recent Buffaloberry planting with instructors **Steve Woodis** and **Lars Santana**.



The Craig Field Office Has Moved!

The new address is:
145 Commerce Street
Craig, CO 81625

Katie Alexander,

Student Career Experience Program employee, Montrose, and Kirsten Melvin, Student Temporary Employee Program employee, Delta, were recently getting their hands muddy discussing soils correlation to rangeland ecological sites with **Lars Santana, Rangeland Management Specialist**, Montrose.



Katie will be a senior this fall attending Colorado State University majoring in soils and crop science.

Kirsten will be a sophomore this fall and is an environmental science major at Mesa State.

Wayne Jipsen is the
New Area Conservationist!

Area Two

John Fusaro, Rangeland Management Specialist, Fort Collins Field Office, made a presentation to an international group of Nature Conservancy staff, and partners about cross boundary and landscape-scale prescribed grazing as part of the innovative conservation programs in the Laramie Foothills region.

He also spoke about integrating grazing with prescribed fire, invasive species management, and monitoring.

This was one stop in a week-long tour and workshop put on jointly by The Nature Conservancy, Emerald Planet, and the Colorado State University Center for Protected Areas Management.

The individuals in attendance were from China, Micronesia, New Guinea, South America, Central America, and Mexico.

Another successful Wray Waterfest was held April 25 for 372, 4th, 5th and 6th graders.

Several NRCS and district offices helped, including Yuma, Holyoke, Burlington, and Flagler field offices, and **Rich Mullaney, RC&D Coordinator**,

Northeast Colorado RC&D; **Kristi Gay, RC&D Coordinator**, East Central Colorado RC&D; and **Lynn Lovell, Agricultural Engineer**, Sterling Field Office.

Conservation District helpers were from Haxtun and Yuma County.

Extension Service, Division of Wildlife, State Parks, Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, Health Department, Wray Volunteer Fire Department, National Weather Service, and Farm Service Agency also pitched in to help.



The Sedgwick County and Haxtun Conservation Districts, in association with the Holyoke and Julesburg Field Offices, managed by **Cindy Einspahr, District Conservationist**, have held two wind meetings within the last few months that focused on information out-



reach to producers to help them make wise decisions on wind energy.

One of the goals of both Districts was to hear from producers who are interested in enrolling their land in a Wind Energy Landowner Association, LLC., to market their land to interested development companies.



Based on the information that has been provided at previous meetings, a detailed map showing the potential footprint area for the Landowner Association can be produced.

The Districts hope to have a third meeting with those same producers to form the Landowner Association.

In early August, National Wind, LLC, will hold an informational meeting in hopes to find a footprint in Sedgwick and parts of Phillips County.

Also, TCI, a company that is small in size but very innovative, is interested in smaller projects possibly tying in with the local electric company.

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The Wray Field Office

(FO) has been monitoring knapweed-treated fields in Southern Yuma County since late February.

To date, no new knapweed plants have sprouted. What a change in these fields from the year before! It appears very good control was accomplished last year.

Once Yuma County CD, Northeast RC&D (**Rich Mullaney**), and the Wray FO took over the project in the fall of 2006 by holding identification meetings, acquiring grants from State Conservation Board, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program-Invasive Species, about 90 percent of the landowners began to cooperate in the efforts that were being made.

The Franktown Field

Office recently celebrated Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month with a Luau lunch.

The field office staff brought foods representative of the Asian and Pacific area to share and also viewed several Asian newspapers that were brought in.

The lunch included Spam Musube, cooked beef, Shamishma fish, preserved duck eggs, stir fried Bulgogi, oriental cabbage salad, cherry wontons, and pacific punch, to name a few.

Overall, the Franktown staff enjoyed the celebration and got to taste food that they were not accustomed to eating and they learned more about the culture.

The event challenged the staff to research the culture and share with one another their findings and it brought further clarity to why we should celebrate diversity.



The Wray Field Office

hosted a round table information presentation on the challenges of reclaiming irrigated sandhill fields to native vegetation.

With the possibility of land center pivot fields losing their water, we need to understand how to effectively reclaim it.

Roy Roth from the Colorado State University presented possible strategies.

A Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) was developed pertaining to this issue for funding.

The CIG grant proposes different scenarios to reclaim the land to permanent vegetation.



The Wray NRCS Field

Office and Yuma County Conservation District visited 60 first graders at the Wray School.

A short program about picking a tree and where and how to plant a tree was presented.

The first graders were all receiving a tree for Arbor Day.

The Yuma County

Conservation District provided a Colorado blue spruce for each 5th grade student in the three schools in the District.

Shown below is **Gary Campfield, District Conservationist**, demonstrating how to properly plant a tree.

This was a short program to help prepare students for the 6th grade poster contest.



Area Three

The Walsenburg Field

Office demonstrated the River Trailer for La Veta Elementary School, Preschool thru 6th Grade, in Celebration of Earth Day.

Tony Arnhold, District Conservationist, and Earth Team Volunteer, Rick Dunn held the demonstrations.

Over 160 kids and teachers learned what a watershed is and the basics of how it functions. The students also took part in additional activities during the day, including lessons on how to plant flowers.

Bluebird houses sponsored by the Upper Huerfano CD were put up around the school grounds.



Laura Craven,

Woodland Park **Soil Scientist**, Vern Vinson, Teller-Park Conservation District (CD); Pat Galvin, Teller-Park CD Manager; and Kari Moore, Ultima Clerk, gave talks on soils and watersheds at the Earth Promise Day at Columbine Elementary

in Woodland Park on May 16, 2008.



Area Three hosted a prescribed burn training this spring.

With the black line established during the training and additional work that the landowner did on the mineral line, the burn went off flawlessly.

It took one hour to burn the 30-acre site.



Area Three held an Ag Waste Management Training Session in early July.

Karma Anderson and **Gene Backhaus**, **John Andrews** and **Dave Wolff**, Lakewood State Office representatives, in addition to representatives from the Colorado Department of Health and the Environment and Colorado State University, taught the class.

Topics included planning

considerations: Animal Feeding Operations vs. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, emerging resource issues—water and air, components of a CNMP, and an update on Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and federal regulation changes.

A technical service provider who has done work on systems in Bent County gave presentations during the afternoon tour.



Area Tree hosted two range computer training sessions.

Mike Wall, Resource Conservationist, Greeley Area Office, **Josh Saunders, Range Specialist**, Fort Morgan Field Office, **Ben Berlinger, Area Rangeland Management Specialist**, La Junta Area Office and **Ed Kilpatrick, Soil Conservationist**, Las Animas Field Office, gave presentations on the latest technology in range screening and planning.

Five conservation districts (CDs) in Area Three have sponsored Watershed

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area news cont.

Stakeholders' Meetings this past spring.

Teller-Park, South Pueblo, Upper Huerfano, and Prowers CDs obtained grant money from the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts to host these meetings.

The goal of the meetings was to find out what natural resource concerns were had by local landowners.

The districts will then look at the compiled information for their long-range plans and other locally led projects.



The Spanish-Peaks Purgatoire River CD is working with a large group of partners on watershed issues in the district.

The main areas of focus are agriculture, forestry, coalbed methane, and fragmentation.

The group will soon hold their third meeting prior to holding a public meeting to educate landowners in the watershed.

Area 3 hosted the Colorado Section of the Society for Range

Management's 2007 Excellence in Rangeland Conservation Award Tour on the Tri Lazy W Ranch near Nathrop.

Jay and PK Wilson showed tour participants their forest pastures and an extensive cooperative water system prior to taking the group to their ranch headquarters for a BBQ lunch and a tour of their roller chopping project, irrigation and water systems, and their forage production fields.

The area will host another tour this fall on the Welch Ranch in southeastern Pueblo County.

The Welch Ranch also received the 2007 Excellence in Rangeland Conservation Award.



The Burlington,

Cheyenne, and Flagler Conservation Districts and the East Central and Northeast Colorado Resource Conservation and Development Councils sponsored a Carbon Credit Meeting this spring.

Ted Dodge, National Carbon Offset Coalition, was the featured speaker.

In May, the Woodland

Park Natural Resources Conservation Service staff, Teller-Park Conservation District, and the Colorado State Forest Service sponsored a meeting for private forestland owners in Lake George.

After the 2002 fire year, EQIP funds were authorized for forest management and wildfire mitigation.

In addition, the Colorado State Forest Service has a Forest Ag Program to help landowners.

Presenters at the meeting described the two programs and the benefits to forestland owners.

The Natural Resources

Conservation Service (NRCS) field offices and conservation districts in Area Three and their many partners continue to take the lead in on-the-ground work to eradicate tamarisk.

The area has projects in offices that are on the main stem of the Arkansas and some of its tributaries.

Various methods used in the projects include aerial spraying, mechanical, and chemical work, and tamarisk beetles.



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area news cont.

Area Three hosted

John Brewer and Steve Butler from National Headquarters and Sara Schmidt, West Regional Chief.

The Pueblo Field Office staff explained conservation planning, Conservation Technical Assistant, progress, goals, the web soil survey, etc., to the visitors.

**The Hugo Field Office**

and High Plains and Prairie CDs sponsored a Leafy Spurge Field Day in June.

Dr. George Beck from CSU gave a presentation on how to get rid of the noxious weed.



Rich Rhoades, District Conservationist; Kathy Trujillo, Secretary; Patty Knupp, Biologist; Pam Mora, Student Career Experience Program; all from the Pueblo Field Office; Scott

Shirola, Conservation Specialist, Colorado Association of Conservation Districts; and Jane Rhodes, Earth Team Volunteer; assisted with a two-day effort to educate 140 kids, ages 7 to 12 years old, in conservation.

The event, sponsored by Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, was targeted toward low income and minority youth.

The group had three stations—the river trailer, snoutel model, and conservation coloring activities.



Bill Gardiner, District Conservationist and **Darol Wilson, Agronomist**, Salida Field Office, taught 2nd graders about soils and the circle of life during the annual Habitat Field Day, which was held at the Mount Shavano campground.

**Profitable Pasture Management Workshop**

A dozen individuals gathered at the Holly Community Center April 10th for a "Profitable Pasture Management" workshop.



Glynda Tyree, Shauna Hartshorn, and Steve McEndree work their way through an exercise during the workshop.

The event was sponsored by Northeast Prowers and Baca County Conservation Districts, the Springfield and Holly Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices.

Tim Steffens, La Junta Area Range Specialist, spoke in detail on how grazing management can impact an operation's profit margin.

Attendees broke into small groups and ran numbers on two fictional ranches – one a minimal input operation while the other sought to maximize profit through maximized production.

Through the exercise, participants were able to determine for themselves the relative value of different management actions in improving profitability, where grazing management might help, and where it would not.

The remainder of the day was spent exploring possibilities for improving profitability and reducing risk through grazing management. Several producers present provided valuable experiences with successful grazing management programs.

For more information about this and future workshops, contact the Northeast Prowers or the Baca County Conservation Districts.

Area Four

San Juan Resource Conservation and Development Receives National Recognition

by Doug Ramsey, RC&D Coordinator
San Juan RC&D, Durango

The San Juan Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) was recently recognized with the Department of the Interior's Cooperative Conservation Award for the significant improvements in water quality and aquatic habitat in the Animas River watershed.

This award was one of 21 awards presented by Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne to groups who have achieved excellence in conservation through collaboration and partnerships.

For over ten years, the San Juan RC&D has worked with the Animas River Stakeholders Group (ARSG) in their efforts to clean up heavy metal contamination from the 100 years of hard rock mining in the San Juan Mountain near Silverton, Colorado.

Through cooperation and collaboration, this volunteer group of concerned citizens, mine companies, landowners, and government agencies slowly formed and began to dissolve the distrust that existed between these diverse participants.

It was soon realized that

everyone shared the same values as to the health of the local economy and Animas River, allowing a strong collaboration to develop.

Since their beginning in 1994, the San Juan RC&D has served as the fiscal agent for the ARSG, applying for grants, administering contracts, and hiring a Watershed Coordinator for the reclamation work that needed to be done.

While the San Juan RC&D took care of the fiscal management, the Animas River Stakeholders Group could concentrate on "putting conservation on the ground."

During this time, over \$35 million for remediation activities and more than \$3 million of in-kind volunteer support has been completed by the Animas River Stakeholders, local mining companies, along with state and federal agencies.



Cindy Dvergsten, San Juan RC&D Council Member holds the Cooperative Conservation Award from the Department of Interior.

With these resources, they have been able to complete over 50 clean-up projects and make a significant improvement to the water quality of the Animas River.

Some areas that, just a few years ago, were some of the most deteriorated stream segments in Colorado, are now showing improvement with increases in aquatic life and the return of fish life.

The San Juan RC&D is proud that they were able to assist the Animas River Stakeholders Group in improving the Animas River Watershed and share in the Cooperative Conservation Award with the other partners of the Animas River Stakeholders Group.



Colorado CONSERVATION PLANNING

Our Purpose.
Our Passion.

Prescribed Grazing Management

by Katherine Burse-Johnson
Public Affairs Specialist

Prescribed Grazing is a way for Colorado ranchers and farmers to make the best use of their available grazing land in order to feed their domestic and wild animals in a manner that will reduce negative impacts to soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.

Prescribed Grazing can be used to accomplish a variety of land management objectives such as control of noxious weeds, reducing the incidence of wildland fire, grazing land improvement, riparian and watershed management, and improving wildlife habitat.

In order to effectively utilize prescribed grazing, the management objectives for a particular plant, plant community, or animal production enterprise must first be clearly identified.

The frequency, intensity, timing, and duration of grazing events can be prescribed along with the method of stocking, and the kind, number, and class of animals required to meet the stated objective(s).

Prescribed grazing applies to all lands where grazing animals are managed. This includes browsing (feeding on vegetation such as the shoots, leaves, twigs, or trees) by animals.

Designing a prescribed grazing plan is the first step in your pasture management system and is suitable for all farm sizes and pastures where grazing animals are managed.

A solid prescribed grazing management plan allows for flexibility and benefits the overall health of the environment.

The Benefits of Prescribed Grazing Management

There are many benefits associated with proper prescribed grazing management, which include:

1. Improve or maintain the health and vigor of selected plant communities.
2. Improve water quality and quantity.
3. Promote economic stability.
4. Improve or maintain animal health and productivity.
5. Provide food, cover, and shelter for animals.
6. Reduce soil erosion and improve soil condition.
7. Improve profitability by reducing feed costs.

Las Animas Community Garden - Watch it Grow!

by Nancy Appel, District Manager
Bent Conservation District

It started with a small group of people who had an idea and it grew into The Las Animas Community Garden.

The Garden was established to provide hands-on educational and service opportunities for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) students of Las Animas, and enrichment opportunities for all generations of Las Animas Citizens, to provide for food needs of individuals and families living in the city of Las Animas, Bent County and the surrounding region.

Participants include the Las Animas FFA, Las Animas School District, Bent County Health Care Center, Bent Conservation District, the Las Animas Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Field Office, Corrections Corporations of America, the City of Las Animas, Las Animas Helping Hands, Attorney Mark MacDonnell, and Bent County.

The Community Garden brought generations together as individuals prepared the space for the garden located in the empty lot between Las Animas High School

and Bent County HealthCare Center.

Technicians from the Las Animas NRCS provided technical assistance by surveying the property and taking soil samples. Local farmers helped prepare the ground for planting.

The Las Animas FFA Chapter and the Las Animas Helping Hands provided labor to remove rocks and install the drip system.

It was estimated that approximately \$7,000 had been given to the project through in-kind donations.

The Bent Conservation District applied for and received a grant through the El Pomar Youth and Community Service (EPYCS) to cover the costs of the soil samples and the installation of a drip irrigation system.

The District then designed the drip system and ordered drip supplies. The Bent Conservation District also approached Hollar Seeds of Rocky Ford and Jim Schleining of McClave to obtain seeds for the first planting.

Attorney Mark MacDonnell prepared the miscellaneous legal paperwork which formed the non-profit corporation.

Corrections Corporation of America provided fencing. Water service and a meter with hydrant were provided by the Bent HealthCare Center in conjunction with the City of Las Animas.

Tomato and pepper plants were donated by VanHook's Fruit and Vegetable Market located in La Junta.

Local individuals volunteered their time to get the project off the ground and will maintain the Garden.

May 28th was a big day for the Garden. Many volunteers were assisted by the Bent Conservation District as they installed the drip system and then planted the donated seeds.

For this growing season the Garden was planted mostly in pumpkins but also included corn, tomatoes, green peppers, cucumbers and cantaloupe.

The main focus is to provide vegetables for local families and to have a successful pumpkin patch that local children can visit this fall.

All the partners continue to pursue grant funds which will help pay for water consumption, a storage shed and a gazebo.

Future plans include incorporating the Bent County Health Care Center greenhouse for growing the tomato and pepper plants for future growing seasons.

Pathways through the Garden making it handicap assessable are also planned.

Now, the Garden is growing like weeds. It's a race to see who will win, the Koshia or the Pumpkins.

On July 2, between 7 and 9 a.m. we will put the "we" back into weeding.

Do a row, do a quadrant, do a single pumpkin plant. Stay for an hour, stay for five minutes. Every little bit helps.



Jeremy Cass, Bent Conservation District Technician (far left), and volunteers listen as Nate Cranson (fourth from left and pointing) explains the layout for the Las Animas Community Garden drip system.

Students get a lesson in Windbreak Tree Planting



by Deborah Clairmont, Soil Conservationist
Brighton Field Office



Students plant windbreaks for landowners as part of Earth Day.

Students from the Brighton Collegiate High School, Brighton High School, and Prairie View High School participated as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Earth Team Volunteers to celebrate Earth Day by planting a windbreak for landowners Jerry and Kim Gieseke.

Despite the cold weather, teacher Ms. Dezerae Daniels brought 16 of her Science Students from Brighton Collegiate High School to learn about windbreaks and soil erosion.

Mr. Jerry Barden, agriculture teacher, brought 22 Future Farmers of America students from Brighton High School and Prairie View High School.

Trees and shrubs were planted on the east and west sides of the property.

Students planted approximately 500 trees: Rocky Mountain Juniper, Austrian Pines, Honey Locust, Wood Rose, Native Plum, Buffaloberry, and Peach-leaf Willow.

To further students' knowledge, guest speaker Norland Hall, District Forester for Fort Morgan District of the Colorado State Forest Service, spoke about different types of trees and how to design a successful windbreak to help prevent soil erosion.

In addition, Jeremy Cronk, Adams County Small Acreage Coordinator, instructed students

on how deep to plant trees and shrubs, and how to place rabbit guards around the young saplings.

Each group of students received information about future employment with NRCS through USDA Scholarships, Student Career Experience Program, and Student Temporary Employment Program by Karen Mandujano, Soil Conservationist, Brighton Field Office.

Drinks and snacks were sponsored by the West Adams Conservation District.



More than 500 trees were planted by this student and others as part of Earth Day.



Volunteers in Hugo, Colorado join in the effort to plant trees along the Coulson Nature Trail during Earth Day.

Earth Team Volunteers Improve Walking Trail

by Al White, Soil Conservationist
Hugo Field Office

Hugo Field Office hosted a two-hour Earth Team tree planting day in May where approximately 20 volunteers gave their time and efforts to plant trees.

Thirty Eastern Red Cedar trees were planted to bring beauty to the two-mile-long Coulson Nature Trail in Hugo.

The trees were purchased from Flagler by the High Plains

and Prairie Conservation Districts.

Supplies to plant the trees were donated by the East Central Resource Conservation and Development Council, D. Lacey's Hardware, Osborne's Supermarket, the Hugo Volunteer Fire Department, Town of Hugo, Hugo Improvement Partnership, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Techno Tips

Mobile Office Use in Colorado

by Kyle Franz, Soil Conservationist, Cheyenne Wells Field Office, and
Tim Weltmer, Soil Conservation Technician, Greeley Field Office

Several NRCS field offices across the state of Colorado have been the recipients of mobile offices in the past few months.

These mobile offices are NRCS vehicles that are equipped with a tablet or laptop computer, a desk mount, a printer, a scanner, a power inverter, a broadband internet access card, a digital camera and GPS equipment.

A mobile office can be as simple, however, as a laptop or tablet computer.

The mobile office serves our producers and cooperators by providing NRCS personnel the ability to plan our customer's farms or ranches in their domain.

Projects that historically have required sitting in an office at a computer can now be completed anywhere.

The mobility of these systems can reduce the number of trips from the office to the field and allow more time in the field putting conservation on the ground.

We are now taking the office to the customer to assist them in addressing their resource concerns.

Mobile office set up in 2006 Ford 4-door with Jotto Desk mount for tablet, toolbox for printer, and dash for scanner.



Mobile Set-up in Dodge with Ram model mounts for computer and printer.

The new mobile offices have capabilities that will allow the user to:

- ✦ Identify exact location for planned terraces and other ground-disturbing activities and submit the CO-SSC-1 via Microsoft Outlook.
- ✦ Utilize GPS technology and ArcMap to inventory, locate or plan fences, pipelines, water facilities, pastures, range data stations, and numerous other conservation practices.
- ✦ Utilize GPS technology and ArcMap to plan, identify or locate new center pivots.
- ✦ Download surveys from the Total Station and Recon to their computer to verify accuracy before going back to the office.
- ✦ Develop engineering packets in the field for the producer to sign and the contractor to have a copy.
- ✦ Inventory range and develop feed and forage balance sheets in the field with the producer. Then put together a grazing schedule that he/she can sign and retain a copy for his/her records and implementation.
- ✦ Access Protracts and certify practices or modify a contract. Have the producer sign the 1245 or 1156 and submit for approval.
- ✦ Access Ecological Site Descriptions, create soils maps and look up soil survey information from Web Soil Survey, print a report or map.
- ✦ Develop nutrient, pest, residue, and irrigation water management plans in the field with the producer that he/she can sign and leave him/her a copy for implementation.
- ✦ Certify practices while in the field and apply them in Toolkit.
- ✦ Fill out WHEGs or CPA-52s in the field.
- ✦ Write assist notes in Toolkit in the field.
- ✦ Send e-mail while in the field or access E-FOTG for forms, standards, and specifications.
- ✦ Print any plans, practice standards, maps, completed job sheets, etc. while in the field or with the producer and get their signature immediately.

More information is posted at:

<http://www.co.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/ComputerAppsInfo/TechTeam/MobileOfficeUseInColorado.html>

Baca Playa Lakes Festival

By Misty George, District Manager, Baca County

Baca County 5th graders had a unique opportunity to explore some very distinctive water features of our region on May 5th and 6th during the Playa Lakes Festival.

Fifty-six students and a dozen teachers from Kim, Pritchett, Springfield, Campo and Vilas participated in the Festival sponsored by the Ogallala Commons, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, and Baca County Conservation District.

Monday morning was spent at the Campo Community Center learning all about the water cycle and the role playas play.

Festival Coordinator Darryl Birkenfeld described these dry lakebeds as very shallow, dynamic water features that only have water in them periodically, after a large precipitation event.

Day two of the festival included classroom education on local watersheds and aquifers by Birkenfeld and Storm Casper.

Local rancher Joe Dixon detailed the history of Dripping Spring, located southwest of Campo. Students also saw Indian stair cases and teepee rings along the trail.

The final event for the Festival was touring Springfield's waste water treatment plant.

Students left with a better understanding of how critical water conservation is as our aquifer continues to decline.



Sandra Geer Awarded DFEB Unsung Hero Award

Sandra Geer, Area Administrative Coordinator for Area One in Grand Junction, Colorado, was nominated and chosen to receive the Denver Federal Executive Board Unsung Hero Award in May.

Sandra was nominated by Claudette Nicolas, who is a Field Office Assistant in the Montrose Field Office.

Below is an excerpt of the nomination that won Sandra the award.

"I met Sandra in January of 2000 when I began working as a Program Technician for the Shavano Conservation District in Montrose, Colorado.

The person I replaced had moved out of state and no one else was available to help me figure out what I should be doing.

The District Conservationist, at that time, suggested that I contact Sandra, who is an Area Administrative Coordinator.

I have been at the Montrose USDA Service Center for eight years now and I'm not sure that I could have done it without her.

Sandra spends many hours helping people. In some cases, I don't think the people that she helps realize the time and effort that she puts in.

Sandra is always looking for ways to help the agency run more efficiently and she is conscientious when using the agency's equipment, money, and/or other resources.

When the USDA building, in Craig, Colorado, burned down, Sandra emailed other NRCS offices



Sandra Geer, Area Administrative Coordinator, Area One, holds the Unsung Hero award and certificate she recently received from the Denver Federal Executive Board.

in Colorado to request equipment donations.

All of the items that were listed on the request were donated to Craig by other offices, eliminating the need to order new equipment.

While other people are dodging extra work and complaining about the work they already have, Sandra is volunteering wherever she can.

She writes articles for the agency's newsletter, judges coloring contest entries, helps with the local water festival and other children's events, coordinates volunteers for Earth Team, and participates in other agency and community events. She doesn't let other people's lack of enthusiasm cripple her own.

I think that Sandra Geer deserves this award because she is truly a public servant. Her priorities lie with helping our agency and the people we serve.

She is an asset that gets overlooked because she never complains and she makes her job look effortless when, in reality, it's not."

**Congratulations
Sandra!**

Go Green:

Reuse Cloth, Paper, or Plastic Bags

story from the GSA Link newsletter

Paper or plastic is fast becoming a phrase of the past at supermarket checkouts as the movement for less consumer waste and more sustainability continues to grow.

It's been a year since San Francisco made waves when it became the first U.S. city to ban plastic shopping bags in supermarkets.

City officials added a tax to the bags but then decided to outlaw them all together one year later.

The plastic bags were replaced with biodegradable or recyclable bags, which cost a



few cents more to make, but ultimately decrease the amount of plastic that ends up in landfills or in the ocean.

In 2002, Ireland passed a tax on plastic bags that ended up with a 94 percent decrease in their use. A cultural phenomenon blossomed.

Within a year, much of the population invested in cloth or reusable grocery bags and it almost became socially unacceptable to use or buy plastic bags when shopping.

Whole Foods dropped their option for plastic bags at all stores nationwide on Earth Day this year.

Within the next few months, they will deplete their supplies and then only offer 100 percent recycled paper bags for shopper's use and the option of receiving five cents back for every bag you bring in for reuse – plastic, paper or cloth.

Luckily, it's easy to do your part. Use cloth or reused paper or plastic bags when you shop.

Reuse will prevent more plastic from going into landfills and depending on where you shop, could even save you some green.



One to Grow On...



"The starting point of all achievement is desire. Weak desire brings weak results."

~ Napoleon Hill

"Conflict cannot survive without your participation."

~ Wayne Dyer

"In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock."

~ Thomas Jefferson

"Do the hard jobs first. The easy jobs will take care of themselves."

~ Dale Carnegie

"The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials."

~ Chinese Proverb

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."

~ Colin Powell

"Your future is created by what you do today, not tomorrow."

~ Robert Kiyosaki

"If you want the rainbow, you've got to put up with the rain."

~ Jimmy Durante

"We tend to get what we expect."

~ Norman Vincent Peale



PLASTIC BAG FACTS

It can take as many as 1,000 years for a disposable plastic bag to break down in a landfill.

- Worldwide, somewhere between 500 billion and one trillion plastic bags are used each year.
- In New York City alone, one less grocery bag per person per year would reduce waste by 109 tons and save \$11,000 in disposal costs.
- When one ton of paper bags is reused or recycled, 3 cubic meters of landfill space is saved and 13 - 17 trees are spared!

Featured Landowner

Colorado CONSERVATION PLANNING Our Purpose. Our Passion.

Louis and Barb Fenno Fenno Ranch Silt, Colorado

Louis and Barb Fenno, owners of Fenno Ranch, are second generation ranchers in Silt, Colorado, which is located 185 miles west of Denver.

The Fenno Ranch is 393 acres of hay land and was purchased in 1990.

They currently have 240 acres of their land under irrigation through the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). They also raise 100 head of beef cows.

"When we first purchased this land, there was a major problem getting water to where it was needed," Louis Fenno recalled. "The distribution system was a mess."

Such problems resulted in nearly 10 to 15 feet of open ditches that contributed to salinity, which is prevalent on the Western Slope.

Louis spent 54 years in ranching and admits that his biggest challenges over the years have been with irrigation. He and his wife, Barb, consulted with the NRCS and the Bookcliff Conservation District (CD) to see what could be done.

"We knew we couldn't handle this project on our own," Barb said. "We needed the technical and the financial assistance from the NRCS and the conservation district."

In 2005, the NRCS enrolled

the Fenno Ranch in the EQIP Salinity Program. But this soon became a neighborhood project that involved several landowners and required everyone's cooperation.

Several meetings were held to discuss options that were available to them as a group and as individuals.

The Salinity Project was designed to reduce the salt loading in the Colorado River from irrigated agriculture. The resource concern -- water quality and quantity -- was evaluated with the landowners to discuss the options that best fit the need of the property.

Since Louis and Barb were the pioneers of the project, the NRCS got to work with closing the ditches, installing nearly three miles of pipeline and several sideroll and big gun sprinkler systems to properly manage the resources.

"The Fennos had a lot of challenges facing their land," said Dennis Davidson, District Conservationist, NRCS, Glenwood Springs. "It was my goal to help this family."

Since the NRCS's involvement, the Fennos have enjoyed a savings in time, labor, and water, and they have also seen an increase in their hay production.

"Thanks to the NRCS, we went from just producing enough hay to feed our cattle to producing enough hay to feed our cattle and



sell it," Louis said. "It's really nice."

The Fennos have also used district funding to help fight noxious weeds on their property.

"When we moved here we had a serious weed issue and it's amazing how much of it has been eliminated with the help of the District," Louis said.

The Fennos continue to work with the Bookcliff CD in eliminating the weeds and they say they are satisfied with the progress that has been made thus far.

"The Fennos have been very cooperative with the District on this project," said Sharie Prow, District Manager, Bookcliff CD.

In the next five years, the Fennos have several goals they would like to accomplish, including adding an additional sprinkler system on 46 acres of their land, eradicating all the weeds, converting a portion of their property to wildlife habitat, and reseeding more on their land.

Through the assistance of the NRCS, the Bookcliff CD, and other funding partners such as the Basin States Salinity Program and the Colorado River Water Conservancy District, the Fennos are well on their way to achieving their conservation goals.